POL00305585

From: Belinda Crowe[/O=MMS/OU=EXCHANGE ADMINISTRATIVE GROUP (FYDIBOHF23SPDLT)/CN=RECIPIENTS/CN=BELINDA CROWE79B93F11-569F-4526-A078-F5B4958A8917220]

Sent: Sun 10/08/2014 10:02:33 AM (UTC)

To: Martin Edwards GRO

Cc: Chris M Day GRO; Belinda Crowe GRO

Subject: Re: Second Sight: Part 2 Response

Thanks Martin
I've also has some limited exchanges with Chris A yesterday who wants to long-grass this if possible until his return. My concern with that is that JFSA have a copy and know that we are being pressed to comment. If they lose patience they may decide to go public with it and it would be helpful to have something on the record. **However I am now considering trying to get SS on a conference call tomorrow to talk them through the report first - discuss the detail rather than emphasise the overarching points about quality too much at least at this stage.** I suspect, however, that they may get JFSA on the call too - Tony had previously suggested that Alan be invited to any meeting with SS to discuss the report. In part it is JFSA pressuring SS to get this out so they have referred to it in a number of documents that have gone out to applicants so POL could be accused of prevaricating. We have provided masses of information and had many conversations with SS about the need to focus on facts etc. If the report goes out as is it will be damaging to us and force us to discredit SS publicly (implicitly at least).

I absolutely understand the point about a diplomatic approach but we have been extremely tolerant and diplomatic so far but it makes no impact because SS consider they are independent and have parliament on their side to do pretty much whatever they want and JFSA encourage them in that view.

We can cross refer as you suggest. It is dealt with in the annex.

We should not refer to Linklaters (or I will check on this) because they will then ask for that advice which we will not give. Its our opinion in any event and we should not be afraid to hold it. Linklaters have just advised on how to deal with it but observed (as have Brunswick) that we should not continue to engage them.

Will add something about public money.

I've had another version of the letter from Linklaters which I will send round tomorrow with further suggestions for handling if I hear more from Chris.

Happy to discuss.

Best wishes
Belinda

Belinda Crowe
148 Old Street, LONDON, EC1V 9HQ
GRO

On 10 Aug 2014, at 10:37, "Martin Edwards" GRO wrote:

Hi Belinda

POL00305585

I've read the letter now. Overall I think it's completely the right thing to do. It's obviously very firm, but nothing jumped out at me as going too far. The only reason I'd soften it is if we thought we had a better chance of getting SS on board to make the necessary changes with a more diplomatic approach - but I'm guessing we're not in that place?

Just a couple of other comments:
- if possible without too much additional work, it would be good to include in the letter some specific examples and cross-references to the elements of the report which fall short of the required standards (or cross-refer to where this is covered in the annex). Having read the letter by itself (as I did) it risks sounding like a series of generalised assertions rather than specific, evidence-based comments - which could then be dismissed as just being the Post Office's opinion.
- is it worth mentioning that we've also taken views from Linklaters and they agree in their professional opinion with our assessment of the report? Might help to reinforce the point that, objectively, the report falls short of acceptable professional standards (and it's not just us saying that);
- in the para on the first page where you talk about the significant cost we've invested to date, worth emphasising that this is public money (and perhaps also mention how much has been spent on SS to date?). Will help underline why we have an obligation to demand acceptable standards (and also useful if the letter gets into the public domain).

Give me a shout if useful to discuss.

Thanks,
Martin

From: Belinda Crowe
Sent: Friday, August 08, 2014 04:25 PM
To: Chris M Day; Martin Edwards
Cc: Belinda Crowe
Subject: Second Sight: Part 2 Response

Chris, we discussed the fact that I am preparing to send a letter to Second Sight in response to their 'generic' report which will go to applicants in the Scheme and may well end up becoming public.

I have left a message for Chris Aujard as I understand he is picking up some texts in the hope that he will clear this over the weekend. However, if he doesn't, Paula asked that you clear it. The text of the letter, which is near final, is attached. Martin is copied as he has agreed to take a look.

There is an annex to go with the addressing the detailed points but they are technical and run to many pages (and are still being worked on).

The aim is to get this out on Monday so I wanted to give you chance to have a look at this rather than hit you with it on Monday.

We have been advised by Linklaters and Brunswick and their comments have been taken on board.

Paula is generally supportive of a robust approach and I am pretty certain Chris is. It is a strong letter but the generic report is potentially very damaging for the Post Office and also the quality of Second sight's work, not only on this report but the individual case reports is so poor that I think we need something formally on the record that shows that we have made attempts to tackle this. the danger of not doing is that we could get criticised for the amount of money we have paid them for such poor quality.

There is a risk that Second Sight pass this to JFSA who make it public as proof that Post Office is attempting to fetter Second Sight's independence and the letter is drafted in a way to mitigate that.

Finally, I may need to ask you to sign it if I cannot get Chris to clear it. I would be happy to sign it but the general view here is that in view of the contents I should not do so as I am secretariat to the Working Group.

POL00305585

I would be happy to discuss and with luck (although not for him) I will manage to get hold of Chris.

Best wishes

Belinda Crowe
148 Old Street, LONDON, EC1V 9HQ

GRO